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Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT O 00476 281722Z

20
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 AID-05 EB-07 NSC-05 CIEP-01

TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-01 OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00

FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01

L-02 H-01 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 PM-03 INT-05

IO-10 AGR-05 /103 W
---------- 099465
R 281534Z FEB 75
FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7450
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, ENRG, PINT, TD
SUBJ: DEVELOPMENTS IN OIL AND SUGAR LABOR NEGOTIATIONS

REF: POS 420

1. MINISTER OF LABOR HECTOR MCCLEAN PROPOSED ON FEBRUARY 25 THAT TEXACO AND THE OILFIELD WORKERS TRADE UNION (OWTU) AGREE NOW ON A ONE-YEAR INTERIM SETTLEMENT WHICH WOULD GO INTO EFFECT IMMEDIATELY AND THAT THEY CONTINUE THEIR PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS TO COVER THE REMAINING TWO YEARS OF THE CONTRACT. TEXACO RESPONDED POSITIVELY BUT THE OWTU, AFTER EXPRESSING INTEREST IN THE IDEA, REJECTED THE WAGE INCREASE FIGURE (20 PERCENT) PROPOSED BY THE MINISTER. IN SPITE OF THE REJECTION, THE MINISTER WAS REPORTED TO BE CONTINUING HIS EFFORTS TO MEDIATE A SETTLEMENT AS THE FEBRUARY 28 DEADLINE FOR HIS EFFORTS UNDER THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT APPROACHED.
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PAGE 02 PORT O 00476 281722Z

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

2. AT THE TEXACO REFINERY, THE DELIVERY OF PRODUCTS TO CONSUMERS IN TRINIDAD IMPROVED WITH THE ENDING OF A FOUR-DAY WORK STOPPAGE BY TANK WAGON DRIVERRS AND LOADERS AT THE COMPANY'S BOND ON FEBRUARY 25. BY THE NEXT DAY, THE NESTLE FACTORY HAD RECEIVED SUFFIENT FUEL TO RESUME PRODUCTION ON TWO OF THE SIX PRODUCTION LINES WHICH IT HAD CLOSED OVER LAST WEEKEND DUE TO LACK OF FUEL. THE GO-SLOW BY TEXACO WORKERS, HOWEVER, REMAINS IN FORCE AT THE REFINERY, THE MARINE DIVISION, AND IN THE OIL FIELDS AND SEVERAL OF THE REFINERY PLANTS WHICH WERE CLOSED LAST WEEK REMAIN IDLE. IN A LETTER TO TEXACO, OWTU PRESIDENT GEORGE WEEKES WARNED THE COMPANY TO RESUME REFINERY OPERATIONS IMMEDIATELY OR THE UNION WOULD BE FORCED TO ENSURE THAT THE OPERATIONS OF "WHAT WOULD THEN BE CALLED THE PEOPLE'S REFINERY" WOULD BE SPEEDILY RESUMED. THE UNION WOULD TAKE ITS STEPS "WITH HELP FROM FRIENDS FROM ABROAD BUT MORE SO BY ALL PATRIOTIC WORKERS."

3. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE PROJECTED ARRIVAL OF A LARGE TANKER TO UPLIFT JET FUEL FOR THE U.S. NAVY (POS 394) HAS BEEN CANCELLED, APPARENTLY ON REQUEST OF TEXACO'S NEW YORK HEAD-QUARTERS, WHICH REPORTEDLY FEARED THAT ATTEMPTED LOADING OF THIS TANKER MIGHT TOUCH OFF UGLY INCIDENTS. LOCAL TEXACO OFFICIALS HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS FOR THE SHIP'S VISIT TO RELIEVE THE PRESSURE ON THE COMPANY'S PRODUCT STORAGE FACILITIES, WHICH ARE FULL OR NEARLY FULL, IN ORDER TO ENABLE THE COMPANY TO RE-START SOME OF THE IDLE PLANTS.

4. MEANWHILE, THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LABOUR CONGRESS (TTLC) SUCCESSFULLY PARRIED THE OWTU'S REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FOR ITS POSITION BY ISSUING A STATEMENT WHICH TERMED THE TEXACO OFFER OF A 30 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE "RIDICULOUS" AND INVITING WEEKES TO MEET WITH THE CONGRESS TO CLARIFY HIS UNION'S POSITION IN THE DISPUTE. THE TTLC STATEMENT SAID THAT THE DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED BY THE OWTU DID NOT PROVIDE THE "FULLEST POSSIBLE INFORMATION" IN SUPPORT OF THE UNION'S 147 PERCENT DEMAND. BY THIS TACTIC, THE TTLC AVOIDED COMMITTING ITSELF TO HELPING THE MOST POWERFUL UNION OUTSIDE THE CONGRESS, WHILE STILL SUPPORTING THE GENERAL AIMS OF THE TEXACO WORKERS.
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5. IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY, NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN CARONI, LTD. AND THE ALL TRINIDAD SUGAR WORKERS UNION REMAIN STALEMATED ON THE TWO REMAINING UNRESOLVED CONTRACT ISSUES- PROFIT SHARING AND WORKING CONDITIONS. THE COMPANY HAS SUGGESTED THAT THE TWO MATTERS BE REFERRED TO THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AS UNRESOLVED DISPUTES. CARONI ALSO REFUSED TO TALK WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ISLANDWIDE CANE FARMERS TRADE UNION UNTIL THE COURTS

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

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RULE DEFINITELY ON WHICH ORGANIZATION OR ORGANIZATIONS MAY LEGALLY REPRESENT THE CANE FARMERS. THE APPEAL IN QUESTION WILL, IF IT FOLLOWS THE NORMAL COURSE, TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS OR YEARS TO BE DECIDED. THESE ACTIONS DO NOT POINT TO AN EARLY RESOLUTION OF THE LABOR PROBLEMS IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY AND HAVE ALREADY RESULTED IN A DOWNWARD REVISION OF THE PROJECTED SUGAR PRODUCTION FROM THE 1975 CROP FROM 228,000 TONS TO 218,000 TONS.

6. COMMENT: WITH THE FEBRUARY 28 EXPIRATION OF THE PERIOD FOR MEDIATION UNDER THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, THE RETURN OF PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS LATE FEBRUARY 28, AND A SCHEDULED MEETING SUNDAY MARCH 2 OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE RULING PNM TO DISCUSS LABOR PROBLEMS, THE PRESSURE IS ON THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE SOME MOVE TOWARD A SOLUTION OF THE TEXACO/OWTU IMPASSE EARLY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF MARCH. HOWEVER, THIS IS TRINIDAD, AND EVENTS MAY YET SIMMER ALONG AWHILE WITHOUT ANY CLEAR RESOLUTION. THE GOVERNMENT AND PNM ARE ACUTELY AWARE THAT THE CHALLENGE BEING LAUNCHED BY WEEKES, PANDAY AND SHAH IS AT LEAST AS MUCH POLITICAL AS IT IS ECONOMIC.
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